

# CIA's new No. 1 knows the ropes

## Deputy Gates positioned to pick up rebuilding program begun by Casey

By John Dillin

Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

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America's Central Intelligence Agency has become bigger and more effective. But it still has some important shortcomings, and it remains in the shadow of recent questionable covert activities.

This, according to many Republican and Democratic analysts, is the legacy of William E. Casey as he steps down after six years as director of America's principal spy agency.

Although Mr. Casey was a political crony of the President, these analysts give him good marks for his performance. When he took over the CIA, its morale, budget, and performance were still suffering from the debilitating effects of the Watergate scandal and subsequent efforts to clean up the agency.

President Reagan announced that Casey's deputy, Robert M. Gates, will take over the CIA. The new director, who must be confirmed by the Senate, faces tough questioning over the agency's role in the sale of US weapons to Iran and the possible diversion of funds to the Nicaraguan contras.

The agency's reputation was also tainted recently by reports flowing from the shooting down of Eugene Hasenfus and others involved in the contra arms supply network.



FILE PHOTO/AP

Robert Gates, 20-year veteran of 'the agency'

Mr. Reagan's choice of Mr. Gates clearly favored expertise over political ideology. Gates, a career intelligence officer, has served for 20 years under Republican and Democratic Presidents in both the CIA and the National Security Council.

Casey and Gates each drew quick praise after announcement of the resignation and appointment.

Former CIA Director William Colby says Casey boosted morale at the agency and gave it a sense of direction. Most important, Casey successfully reorganized the heart of the agency's operation, the analytical staff, Mr. Colby says.

Gates, Colby says, "has done an extremely good job for years" and will follow closely in Casey's footsteps. Another analyst who works on intelligence matters calls Gates "a very thoughtful, competent guy." He says a top priority for the new director will be beefing up the CIA's ability to make sense out of the wealth of information that pours in from thousands of sources.

The White House quickly made clear what it expects of Gates. Presidential spokesman Marlin Fitzwater says that the President "wants to ensure that Mr. Gates carries it on the same course" as Casey.

Even so, the choice of Gates appears likely to upset some conservatives, who wanted a strong, politically minded leader in charge of the agency.

Before Reagan's election, conservatives charged that Democrats had allowed America's intelligence capability to wither. The 1980 GOP platform pledged to "improve US intelligence capabilities for technical and clandestine collection, cogent analysis, coordinated counter-intelligence, and covert action."

Conservatives were particularly upset about what they called an "intelligence debacle" during the Iranian revolution. Now conservatives worry that the uproar over the Iran-contra affair will lead to new cutbacks in CIA strength and freedom of action.

In fact, Colby says Iran-contra will be the first item on Gates's agenda. But Colby doesn't expect Congress or the special investigator to find any major infraction of the law by the agency.

"They may find a footprint or two just a hair over the line," but the agency was primarily following orders, Colby says.

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Roy Godson, a Georgetown University professor who specializes in intelligence matters, says that despite some improvements in recent years, problems remain. All four branches of CIA work - collection, analysis, covert action, and counter-intelligence - still need considerable work, Professor Godson says.

Although Casey has recently come under fire in Congress for his role in Iran-contra, his resignation was prompted by illness. The President asked Casey to become a White House counselor.

Gates, a native Kansan, holds a doctorate in Soviet history from Georgetown University. He has a wife and two children.